

Farm Labor

"EQUAL RIGHTS FOR

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS"

Published by Citizens for Farm Labor, P.O. Box 1173, Berkeley, California

25¢ per copy; \$3.00 for twelve issues

Vol. II, No. 3, October 1964



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"Equal Rights for Agricultural Workers"

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Editor, this issue: Wendy Goepel
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Volume II, Number 3. October 1964.

CONTENTS

Editorials

Visions and Revisions.	1
The Giannini Report and Nonpartisanship.	2

Articles

No Help Wanted	15
by Wendy Goepel	
The Fight for Protection of Women and Children	17
by Anne Draper	
Reconciliation: A Community Development Approach	21
by Kirke Wilson	
"Waiting for Something to Happen	24
by William Esher	
Skill Training and the Farm Worker	31
by William Murdock	

Special Features

C.F.L. Harvest Festival Demonstration	12
The Candidates Take a Stand on Farm Labor.	29
compiled by the Friends Committee on Legislation	
Statistical Report: California's Farm Labor Force.	14
A Resolution on Farm Labor Conditions.	35
by the Santa Clara County Council of Churches	

Departments

Report to the Subscriber, including Annual Report	4
Current and Currents	7
Letters to the Editors	36
The Shape of Things to Come.	36

Poem, A Dream of Apricots	frontpiece
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Ernest Lowe; Henry Anderson; Berkeley.

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A DREAM OF APRICOTS

Young, waiting for the draft to war,
I picked apricots with migrant workers.

I found their valley hot in bursting sun,

A brown bowl walled by hunching,
bear-shaped hills.

They moved through heat in sunken
resignation,

Their blackened, sun-baked faces
Cracked like plates into impassive
stares.

Their ladders pointed high to trees
in lines

So parallel their bodies vanished into
leaves

And sky like lives condemned to
climb invisibility.

Their ladder life turned me to verticals

After a lazy, horizontal youth. This
height

Was like the hangman's swaying
stance.

Perched high with men condemned
to ladders

For a little money, I ate the fruit of
pleasure

And saw it fall into the fury of the
harvest.

James Schevill

New York Times
July 20, 1964

Editorial

VISIONS AND REVISIONS

It seems certain that the bracero program in its old form will not operate during 1965. I became convinced of this only the other day when a well-informed public official expressed surprise that I didn't know an agreement to import Mexican workers under P.L. 414 (The McCarran-Walter Act) was "signed, sealed and ready to deliver on November 4th". He also said that public hearings to determine a new "prevailing wage" rate would be held soon in California but that these were a kind of "smoke screen" because the new "prevailing wages" were already being set by the powers that be. He said I should be glad, because the new rate would be higher than the old one.

This seeming victory over P.L. 78 is, of course, no victory at all. A long above-board fight by many people has been quickly and easily defeated by a single under-board decision to reopen the border to a new captive labor force. In a very similar vein, the authors of articles in this month's FAIRM LABOR suggest that their liberal visions about how to help farm workers are less than successful. The authors, beginning with the assumption that a group of persons treated unjustly could earn the right to receive justice, or could appeal to the impartial justice of the law, have been let down. The question which underlies all this is what those with a vision of justice are to do.

When visions get ripped apart, there are a number of choices. Some of the visionaries move on to a new cause--where the problems are not quite so apparent--and hope they will fare better this time. Some lose all the visions they might ever have had and withdraw. Others cling with doctrinaire tenacity to the cause as they originally conceived it. These will turn aside from the real-life problems of the workers before they will bring themselves to "compromise" their approach to farm labor problems. All of these people discard the farm labor movement and the farm labor problem as it really is because they cannot personally succeed or express their own ideas within it. And most of them can, economically and socially, "afford" to forget the farm worker.

It is very easy to forget that the workers go on living with their same old problems, and that they might not even be surprised or terribly disappointed when our visions fail. They may have no doctrines, no grand visions. They have only a practical problem of how to "make it" every day. They aren't interested in who has the most uncomplaining solution. They might be interested in who will stick with them and their real-life problems when the going gets rough.

But the job of fighting power with less power, and sticking with it, quickly loses its glamor. It is not a task for visionaries, but for those few who can accept tedious, plodding daily work, and defeat time after time, and stay with it because they believe most of all in the people with whom they are working. The final choice open to those in the farm labor movement is to stick with a difficult testing ground for idealism--to be willing to revise one approach and find another and to remember that there are still people "out there".

W.G.

EDITORIAL
THE GIANNINI REPORT AND "NONPARTISANSHIP"

Last March, Governor Brown and Undersecretary of Labor John Henning co-sponsored a hearing on agricultural labor problems. (see FARM LABOR, April 1964) One of the outcomes of the hearing was a request from the Governor to the University of California for a report on agricultural labor requirements and supplies, and guides to public policy in the farm labor market.

The report was made public on September 28. It has become known as the Giannini Report (after the foundation to which primary responsibility was assigned) or the Eric Thor Report (after its principal author). The tenor of the report, and the way its publicity was handled by the Agricultural Sciences Division, the Giannini Foundation, and Thor himself, is perhaps best revealed by the headlines under which the story was carried by the Bay Area press: A WARNING ON BRACERO PROGRAM: and BRACERO PROBLEM PERILS ECONOMY.

The newspaper accounts would lead the average reader to believe that the Giannini Report is little more than a crude threat of economic disaster unless the foreign contract labor system is retained. One pre-publication story quoted the report as stating, "Anyone who says agriculture will get all the workers it needs by doubling the wages doesn't know what he's talking about". However, it may be unfair to judge the report on the basis of what the newspapers say it contains. We have, therefore, read the report itself.

The report contains a number of statistics on workers presumed to be needed in various crops and draws the following broad conclusions:

1. There is no crop, except perhaps the canning-tomato harvest, in which mechanization will significantly reduce labor requirements in the next five years.
2. Indeed, with new land coming into production, the number of harvest workers required may be expected to increase.
3. Foreign workers are a small proportion of the total farm labor force, but they are a large proportion in certain crop activities and in certain areas.
4. Any disruption in the operation of the agricultural industry would have profound effects throughout the state's economy.

The Giannini Report attempts to create the impression that it does not deal with problems of domestic labor supply, claiming that wages, conditions of employment, recruitment policies, and so forth, are "beyond the scope of the study". This appears to evade the very questions which are most central, and which were at least implicit in the Governor's request. However, the purported limitation of the study is more apparent than real, and can only be regarded as disingenuous. What the report actually does is slip a number of crucial conclusions through the back door, gratuitously, without a trace of documentation. For example, we find the totally unsupported allegation that California growers won't be able to recruit from other states because there is a "shortage" of farm workers nationally. This flies in the face of U.S. Department of Labor data which show that there are, in the Southern states alone, chronic unemployment and underemployment of farm workers amounting to the equivalent of 1,400,000 fully unemployed persons.

After stating, helplessly, that it is impossible to estimate how many additional workers might be attracted into the farm labor market by raising wages, the Giannini Report leaps to the utterly gratuitous and astonishing conclusion that wage increases in one part of our state will only attract farm workers away from other parts of the State, and will therefore only change the geographic location of the farm labor "shortage".

The report notes the "reluctance" of unemployed urban workers to leave the welfare rolls or to leave their unemployment insurance benefits, but does not see fit to mention that prevailing wages in agriculture yield a fully-employed person substantially less than the subsistence levels of social welfare programs. The report alleges that it is extremely difficult to compare farm and non-farm wages because the nature of the work is different. The report acknowledges that farm wage rates have tended to move up "a little more slowly than non-farm wage rates", which is understatement carried to the brink of outright deception.

Despite its claims of limitations of scope, the report insinuates that growers cannot pass wage increases on to the consumer, and that even if they could, consumers would then shift to lower priced products from other areas of the nation, with resultant damage to California's economy. One would suppose that a Professor at the University of California, paid a generous salary for his expertise in agricultural economics, would know that California is, in fact, essentially non-competitive with other states in most of its products. California's growers enjoy total or virtual monopolies in olives, apricots, artichokes, plums, prunes, raisin grapes, avocados, lemons, dates, asparagus, canning tomatoes, canning peaches, brussel sprouts, nectarines, figs, garlic, winter lettuce, and many other crops.

If this report had come from the Council of California Growers, one could shrug it off as something to be expected from a self-serving, non-academic pressure group. But the fact that it bears the prestigious imprimatur of the University of California is, to say the least, shocking--and opens up a number of questions which go quite beyond the immediate political issue of whether or not the bracero system is a conscionable public policy. How is it possible that the University of California can claim to be nonpartisan, and can promulgate edicts which would enforce nonpartisanship on its students, and yet lend itself openly to the employer side in a management-worker conflict?

What are the standards of competence and responsibility expected of researchers in the University's agricultural branches?

Agriculture continues to be the Great Exception in the academic circles as in all other circles. "Off campus politics" may be verboten for Young Socialists, Young Goldwaterites, friends of SNCC, and others, but when it comes to Agricultural Economists injecting themselves directly into politics, when it comes to threadbare apologies and shabby rationalizations of the foreign captive labor system, President Keir and Chancellor Strong see nothing wrong and they say not a word.

A.B.; W.E.

Note: Copies of the report to which this editorial refers may be obtained free of charge, while they last, from the Division of Agricultural Sciences, University of California, Berkeley 4, California.

Los Angeles TIMES, Oct. 9. "Dr Paul O'Rourke (Head of the Governor's Anti-Poverty Planning office) disagrees with a recent U.C. report on agriculture labor problems which says there is a shortage of domestic farm labor available in California. 'The statistics used by U.C. in its analysis are based heavily upon Farm Placement Service figures which never have measured the number of available domestic workers', Dr. O'Rourke said. 'These are just estimates. The State Department of Public Health has statistics on only two major counties: Stanislaus and Kern. These studies found that only one worker in five, in a scientifically selected sample, has ever registered with the Farm Placement Services...."

REPORT TO THE SUBSCRIBER

This month marks the first anniversary of Citizens for Farm Labor. We include in this issue an Annual Report of Committee activities and will be sending a more detailed report to dues-paying CFL members in the near future. We would be happy to receive comments and suggestions from our members and subscribers on this report and on the magazine. In the near future we will be reprinting Volume I, Number 1 of FARM LABOR and will send this to all present subscribers as an "Anniversary Gift". It has been out of print for many months and few of our present subscribers have ever read it. One will find, unfortunately, that most of our initial articles and evaluations have as much relevance today as they did in October 1963.

The next regular membership meeting of C.F.L. will be on Wednesday, November 11 at 1615 Bonita Street, Berkeley at 7:30 p.m. If there is any member or subscriber who does not receive postcards reminding him of meetings but would like to receive them, please send us a postcard at Box 1173, Berkeley.

We are happy to announce several new additions to Citizens for Farm Labor. William Esher of San Francisco has been made Executive Assistant to the committee and is now a half-time volunteer staff member; he also works half-time with the West Oakland Farm Workers Association. He may be contacted at TH 8-1633 or WE 1-6407, Monday through Friday. Two new members have been appointed to the Executive Committee of the organization. They are Robert Callagy and Dorothy Kaufman; both are active in the Catholic Worker program in West Oakland; Mrs. Kauffman is a worker representative on the Industrial Welfare Commission's Agricultural Wage Board. Bud Aronson of Sacramento, Willie Brown of San Francisco, Maria Moreno of Visalia, Leonard Levy and Gilbert Simonsen of Los Angeles have joined the Advisory Board of Citizens for Farm Labor.

A group of C.F.L. members have made an attractive photo display depicting the conditions of farm workers in California, 1964. The display was used in a poster-walk at the Annual Harvest Festival in San Francisco (see pages 12-13) and is now available, on loan, to groups. We hope to keep it in constant circulation and encourage our members to arrange to have it displayed in their communities. There are 14 3 x 5 foot panels in the display; there are pictures and basic facts about farm labor on each panel.

Dorothy Kauffman has agreed to head a Speakers' Bureau for the Citizens committee. Her job will be to match requests for speakers with members of C.F.L. who have special competence and have indicated a willingness to address social, civic, political, educational groups in the Bay Area. If you or your group are interested, she can be contacted at 658-6056.

Within a few weeks, Citizens for Farm Labor will be sending a complete report of its first year to all members and advisors. The most important part of that report is, in our opinion, an outline of the activities which members and friends of C.F.L. have engaged in during the past year. This section is reprinted on the next two pages. We invite comment, criticism and suggestions for the future from our readers.

ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES, CITIZENS FOR FARM LABOR, OCTOBER 1964

In the first issue of FARM LABOR magazine, we outlined our general purposes and policies as follows:

"In working toward the goal of equal rights for agricultural laborers, Citizens for Farm Labor is committed to means which are compatible with this end: suasion as opposed to coercion; non-violence as opposed to violence; democracy as opposed to authoritarianism.

We will act as an independent voice, truly representing citizens of California, not dominated by or beholden to any political party, religious denomination, labor body, government agency, or other interest group.

We will work for a social climate favorable to farm workers' efforts toward self-help, in these basic way: Public information, political action and organizational liasion. Within these three basic arenas of activity, we will carry on a variety of concrete projects ranging from research to direct action. We will offer something useful to be done, for each individual's concern and skills. The spectrum of activities will be as broad and varied as the number of persons who choose to work with Citizens for Farm Labor."

We indicate here how we have tried to fulfill our purpose in each one of these areas of activity.

I. Public Information

a) Publication of a monthly magazine.

FARM LABOR has been published nine times during twelve months' time, on an entirely volunteer basis. 26 different authors have contributed to the magazines which have been distributed to subscribers, members and upon request, on an individual basis, to other persons. It has been sold, at times, on the newsstands, and has been sold at key conferences involving farm labor questions. About 5000 copies of FARM LABOR have been distributed.

b) Publicity

C.F.L. Chairman, Henry Anderson, has had a monthly commentary on Berkeley radio station KPFA devoted to discussions of farm labor and related issues.

Members of C.F.L. have assisted two Bay Area television stations--Channel 2, KTVU(independent), and Channel 5, KPIX(CBS) in preparing half hour programs on farm labor. In May KTVU presented a half-hour interview panel with three farm workers, moderated by News Director Al Helms. On Sept. 27, KPIX produced a documentary called POVERTY, Crisis in an Affluent Society: The Plight of Farm Workers.

C.F.L. has issued press releases to daily and weekly papers in northern California. These have received fair coverage in the daily press and excellent coverage in the labor press.

The Committee sponsored a talk on the U.C. campus on May 10; Paul Jacobs, Maria Moreno and Clementine Delouth spoke on their first-hand experience as farm workers.

Leaflets, outlining the condition of farm workers, were distributed at President Johnson's appearance and at the civil rights march during the Republican national convention, in San Francisco in June.

One advisor, Paul Jacobs, and one executive committee member, Max Awner, have had articles on farm workers published in national magazines. Mr. Jacobs' article appeared in the July Commentary and Mr. Awner's in the August Progressive.

Members of C.F.L. have had a number of Letters to the Editor published in Bay Area newspapers.

Pictures from C.F.L.'s photo library have been loaned to a number of interested groups, including the BBC in London where they will be used as part of a major documentary to be entitled, Poverty in America.

Speeches, lectures and sermons to various church, labor, political and educational groups.

Answering requests from students, authors of books, etc.

II. Political Action

- a) Members of C.F.L. have presented testimony at public hearings including: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Sugar Beet Wages, Jan. 8; Attornies Brunwasser and Richards....California Senate Committee on Labor and Welfare, Farm Labor Housing, Jan. 30: Attorney G.N. Hill....California Senate Committee on Labor and Welfare, Farm Labor Housing, Feb 17: Henry Anderson....Governor's Hearing on Farm Labor, March 13: Henry Anderson and Anne Draper....National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, Washington D.C., May 18, Anne Draper
- b) Meeting with Senator George Miller to discuss farm labor legislation.
- c) Meeting with Governor Brown, Albert Tieburg, Alan Cranston to discuss farm labor.
- d) Distribution of action letters on phasing out Public Law 78 and on Public Law 414.
- e) Participation on the Agricultural Wage Board of the Industrial Welfare Commission, by Dorothy Kauffman, Executive Committee member.
- f) Resolutions have been submitted before various conventions by members of C.F.L.; in each case these have been adopted largely as they were entered.
 - ..California Democratic Council, Feb. 23: resolution opposing foreign contract labor, for improved wages and working conditions.
 - ..California Democratic Central Committee: August resolution opposing foreign contract labor, for improved wages and working conditions.
 - ..State Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, September, resolution opposing foreign contract labor, for improved wages and working conditions.
- g) Presentation of farm labor problems to the California Industrial Safety Conference, January, San Francisco.
- h) Preparation of six draft bills to equalize legal status for farm workers in California.
- i) Picture poster parade of the White House Harvest Festival, San Francisco, October.
- j) Urging a boycott of Del Monte products by the Berkeley Co-op, food chain.

III. Organizational Liaison

Relationships have been established with many organizations through one or more joint efforts during the year, including: National Student Association, California Democratic Council, California Labor Federation(AFL-CIO), Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee(AFL-CIO), American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on Legislation, Farm Workers Association, Emergency Committee to Aid Farm Workers, Mexican American Political Association, Welfare Rights Committee, West Oakland Farm Workers Association, California Migrant Ministry, Bishop's Committee for Migrant Workers, National Advisory Committee on Farm Labor, Stiles Hall(Berkeley YMCA), Sequoia Farm Labor Association.

CURRENT AND CURRENTS

"BROWN PLEDGES ALL OUT EFFORT FOR HIGHER FARM LABOR PAY
(Condensed from the Fresno Bee and the Porterville Recorder, Oct. 8)

Governor Edmund G. Brown told a cheering crowd of farm workers in Exeter last night that he intends to do what he can to see that they get more money. The farm workers, numbering about 350, had gathered for a "peaceful demonstration" seeking improvement of farm worker conditions.

Before his informal talk to the workers, he met briefly with representatives of the Tulare County Farm Workers Organization. This closed door session was to hear their views on what is needed to correct the poverty among the agricultural labor force.

During the talk Brown said he was aware of the low pay scale of farm workers and said he intends to do what he can to see they get it. "You've got to take care of the farmer too" he added. Later he said "the miracles brought to our country by agriculture are not fully shared by all our farm people. We are all concerned with seeing that the farmer receives a fair return for his greatest contributions to the economy."

He drew cheers when he stated he would try to help the workers get higher pay. "The work you do is probably the hardest there is" he declared. He warned that the farmer must get more for his produce if workers are to fare better.

Following his talk, Brown presented awards to farm workers who were burned fighting the disastrous Coyote fire near Santa Barbara. Brown asked a worker spokesman, Jose Cruz, how much the fire fighters made, learning that their pay was \$2.29 per hour." (Cruz pointed out at the demonstration that there was no shortage of farm workers for work at this pay, even though they had to travel about 150 miles to the fire site.--ED.)

Three weeks earlier the governor was the featured guest at another meeting. This was the dedication of a factory in Salinas, and his host was the mayor of Salinas: "Subtly, Almost Genially, But Deeply..."

SALINAS MAYOR STRUVE SINKS BRACERO HARPOON INTO BROWN
(Salinas Californian, Sept. 15)

"Salinas Mayor Lawrence Struve sank a harpoon into portly Gov. Edmund G. Brown Monday afternoon. Sank it subtly, almost genially, but deeply nevertheless. The subject was braceros, and the place was Firestone Tire and Rubber Company's Salinas plant, where the governor, the mayor and 300 Firestone guests had just finished a lavish lunch--featuring fresh Salinas Valley vegetables.

To commemorate the occasion (Gov. Brown helped Firestone officials dedicate the new plant), Struve presented the governor with a stylish salad bowl. He remarked as he presented it that, the farm labor situation being what it is, there exists some question whether there will be anything to fill up a salad bowl in 1965.

You are well aware of the importance of agriculture in this area and of the importance of labor in the Salad Bowl of the nation," Struve told the governor. "I'm sure that we'll need your support here if we're going to get the labor we need."

Struve said that "there are no strings attached to the gift and that we are proud that you could take part in the Firestone dedication. "We want this salad bowl to remind you of the Salad Bowl," he said.

At this point, Gov. Brown's face fell into a Brown frown. "Please don't worry about it..." Struve said. Brown arose and, in accepting the salad bowl, said that "it is not possible at the present moment to give a definite report" on the seasonal farm labor outlook for 1965, but "I appreciate the coming of a great plant like this to California...I appreciate the importance of agriculture to California.

(continued next page)

I want to see all the people make money."

"Now we know why he's a popular governor," Struve said as the crowd cracked up (sic)."

THE CAMPAIGN

The 'farm labor crisis' became a political football as the election campaign began to run hot and heavy. U.S. Senator Pierre Salinger told a labor group in San Francisco on Sept. 18 that

"he thought there was 'no question (but) that there is going to be an attempt' to use P.L. 414 in lieu of P.L. 78 and he warned that the provisions of P.L. 414 'do not even provide for some of the basic minimums that were provided in P.L. 78.' Citing the state's high unemployment rate, Salinger said he felt that 'a fair test' should be given to attempting to find labor in California to harvest our crops before we again go out of our country and out of our state to find workers for this vital industry." (Reported in the Union Gazette, Sept. 25.)

But a few weeks later

"Salinger said flatly 'the Johnson-Humphrey administration is not going to let California agriculture go down the drain...Salinger said he has talked with Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz about the possibility of using immigration laws to bring workers into the state to replace braceros...He said he is 'encouraged' by Wirtz's response." (Sacramento Bee, Oct. 10)

Salinger's opponent George Murphy was quoted by the Sacramento Union, Sept. 12, as saying that the damage for lack of farm labor would be enormous.

Incumbent Tom Kuchel expressed the hope that the Mexican farm labor program would be restored, according to the Sacramento Bee, Oct. 4. Six weeks earlier the Santa Clara News had reported the following:

"Senator Tom Kuchel's proposal to mark a century of United States-Mexican friendship by giving our southern neighbor a statue of Abraham Lincoln has been approved. Some \$150,000 has been endorsed by Congress for purchase and installation of the memorial."

THE LIGHTER SIDE: "Gracias Braceros Day"

(from the Sacramento Bee and the Woodland Daily Democrat, Sept. 28)

Woodland's third annual Gracias Braceros Day provided an afternoon of entertainment and hospitality for an estimated 2,500 Mexican national farm workers who downed 800 dozen ice cream bars, 215 cases of soft drinks, and two tons of grapes.

Assemblyman Harold Booth, speaking at the event, complimented the braceros for their manliness in staying with this year's slow incoming tomato crop and promised that the state would not stand idly by without labor for its crops while labor was being brought in from the British West Indies and other places under existing laws to provide labor to harvest the crops of other areas.

...Woodland District Chamber of Commerce president Lou Mickle, had said that representatives of the Mexican government and the state and federal governments would be on hand for the celebration. Major financial support for the event is being furnished by the farm labor associations (grower groups-ED.), farm labor contractors, farmers, and farm oriented businesses.

THE BRACERO ISSUE: Only the names have been changed.

"THE BRACERO PROGRAM IS NOT DEAD; ONE MAN ALONE CAN SAVE IT NOW.
(from the Dixon Tribune, Oct. 1)

"The public believes that the bracero program is dead. This is not so... President Lyndon B. Johnson, in one statement in one day, could eliminate the worries of the American farmers which are rapidly spreading from California to 17 other states as to where the farm labor will come from next year.

Candidate Barry Goldwater has already assured Dixon farmers through the Tribune he favors use of braceros if domestic labor is in short supply...In an effort to take this problem out of politics and secure the approval of both Presidential candidates, the Dixon Tribune telegraphed President Johnson on September 12, asking for help under Section 414, only if the domestic labor supply runs out on the American farmer.

No answer has yet been received...Nevertheless it is believed that once the President has the full information on our farmers' needs for farm labor assurance, he will be willing to envoke the existing 414 law to help them.

...All the assurance desired by Dixon and other farmers is that IF domestic labor runs short, as it did this year, either President Johnson or President Goldwater will use the law which is on the books, without unreasonable restrictions which could make it unworkable. ..."

"BRACERO PLAN OUT, BUT MACHINERY SET UP FOR NEW MEXICAN NATIONAL PROGRAM
(from the Shafter Press, September 30)

"...One cheerful note was sounded in Berkeley by Matt Triggs, assistant legislative representative for the (Farm Bureau) who reported that California farmers will apparently have some supplemental labor from Mexico in 1965 despite the end of the bracero program.

...(Triggs') comments were based on the fact that he had just been informed by "phone from Washington that the U.S. Department of Justice in the "Federal Register", had issued procedures for bringing in Mexican nationals under the Immigration Act (Public Law 414) for periods of from four weeks to six months...The value of this potential source of some supplemental foreign labor depends to a great extent on Department of Labor regulations..."

(from the San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 7)

"Secretary of Labor W. Willard Wirtz held out the possibility here yesterday that Federal authorities will permit use of an immigration law to import Mexican farm workers, despite death of the bracero program on December 31. ...Like Public Law 78, which governs the bracero program, it permits import of temporary workers from abroad. ...Wirtz declined to predict whether steps (to recruit domestic workers through existing government programs) would be successful. Nor would he comment on suggestions by State and labor officials that any successful farm recruit drive would have to include the inducement of better pay and working conditions...."
(This information was released at a press conference in San Francisco where Secretary Wirtz stopped on his way back east from Portland, where he had gone to attend an anti-poverty conference--ED.)

(from the California Farmer, Oct. 3)

"There are many things we do not know about the (414) program. It seems to us the program is at the whim of the President, the Attorney General and the Secretary

CURRENT

of Labor. How does our influence with these people compare with that of organized labor, for example? What "conditions" of employment will the Secretary of Labor impose upon this program? When will he act? Time is the essence. What the heck is the Bureau of Employment Security which has so much control over the program?

We sincerely hope that P.L. 414 slides through smooth as goose grease but we feel it is only fair to point out that you may not get instant Mexicans on the day the P.L. 78 dies unless we start right now to work out the details of 414."

* * *

THE WAR ON POVERTY

FOREIGN FARM HELP CALLED THREAT TO WAR ON POVERTY; BROWN AIDE CRITICIZES GROWERS
(from the Los Angeles Times, Oct. 9)

"Gov. Brown was told Thursday that the surest way to lose President Johnson's war on poverty would be to continue foreign farm labor programs. Dr. Paul O'Rourke, the governor's co-ordinator between Washington and California for the anti-poverty program, also charged that growers have not tried to phase out the dying bracero program by making legitimate attempts to recruit domestic farm workers.

The governor told the Times he was not prepared to judge (O'Rourke's) report now, but added that he was "impressed" by it and that he is not convinced a foreign labor force is needed in 1965. Brown also said he "emphatically denies it's government's obligation to find a substitute for the bracero farm labor program" which will end Dec. 31.

Herbert A. Lee, president of the California-Arizona Farm Labor Assn., told a State Chamber of Commerce meeting Tuesday in San Francisco that concentrated efforts by growers to recruit domestic workers have failed. In Dr. O'Rourke's report, however, the governor was told the reason growers have failed is that American domestic workers "are not a captive labor force as is the bracero and have American expectations for income and work conditions."

"The so-called recruitment efforts by growers have consisted of minor probes into Mississippi, Puerto Rico, the welfare rolls of Alameda County, high school youth and Texas Mexicans," said Dr. O'Rourke. "Only a few hundred workers have been involved in all of these experiments. Direct interviews of these recruited workers indicate a high dissatisfaction with wages and working conditions on California's farms. Many of them indicated that farm work was more acceptable in states of the Northwest."

The governor's anti-poverty chief reported that the "high attrition rate in workers thus recruited can only be explained by the fact that they do not view California farm work in the same way that the bracero does. The defection of these workers is explained directly by inadequate wages offered and poor working conditions," O'Rourke said....."

* * *

"BRACERO DIES IN TRUCK-CAR CRASH

(From the Woodland Daily Democrat, Aug. 17)

"Twenty one Mexican nationals were injured, one fatally, a number of others seriously while en route Sunday morning, shortly before 7 a.m. to a tomato field near Dunnigan, when the truck in which they were riding was struck by a car...driver of the truck was arrested last night on a warrant charging manslaughter."

* * *

WELFARE RECIPIENTS

"STATE PROBE ASKED ON ALAMEDA WELFARE POLICY
(from the San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 7)

State legislators were asked here yesterday to investigate "malicious and illegal practices" in Alameda county's program of forcing welfare recipients to take farm labor jobs.

The request came from Elaine Theis of 3129 Pleiter Avenue, Oakland, who appeared at a State Building hearing of the Assembly Interim Committee on Social Welfare.

She charged that welfare families in Alameda county "were starving" because the farm jobs only paid \$3 a day and each worker "paid \$1.25 a day for bus fare and 25 cents for water he drank while working.

Mrs. Theis also charged that some 500 families had been denied assistance because they refused to work under these 'slave labor' conditions...

The attack on Alameda's policies came during a committee hearing on the State's new welfare work-training program...."

"CALIFORNIA'S 'NO WORK, NO DOLE' PLAN
SEEKS TO TRIM WELFARE ROLLS AND FILL
FARM JOBS

(from the Wall Street Journal, Oct. 6)

LOS ANGELES--A "no work, no dole" welfare plan is spreading in this state amid charges of "slave labor" from jobless relievers and their sympathizers.

The incensed relievers, who are being told to take farm jobs vacated by departing Mexican braceros, have banded together in at least one area and formed an organization to guard their interests. They have picketed local welfare offices and are said to have charged that "farm labor is below our dignity."

The state's aim is two-pronged: to trim the lengthening list of jobless welfare recipients and to ease the shortage caused by the departure of the braceros. ...

...Last week, the board of supervisors of populous Los Angeles County, the state's largest, adopted a program patterned in part after efforts elsewhere...County officials calculate that 3,700 welfare recipients in the area could be put to work on farms, greatly easing the shortage to be caused by the departure of some 7,000 braceros...To offset the inevitable objections, the L.A. supervisors laid out conditions...."

NO ON 14

NO ON 14

NO ON 14

* * *

THOR DEFENDS GIANINI REPORT

Anne Draper of C.F.L. challenged Dr. Eric Thor in a debate held on the U.C. campus Oct. 23. Dr. Thor defended his position taken in the Gianini Report issued last month and commented upon elsewhere in this magazine.

Mrs. Draper challenged Thor on the grounds that his report ignored whole masses of evidence needed in making policy decisions on California agricultural labor problems. Thor countered that the report was exactly what the Governor had requested: a compilation of labor needs in the various crops projected through the next five years.

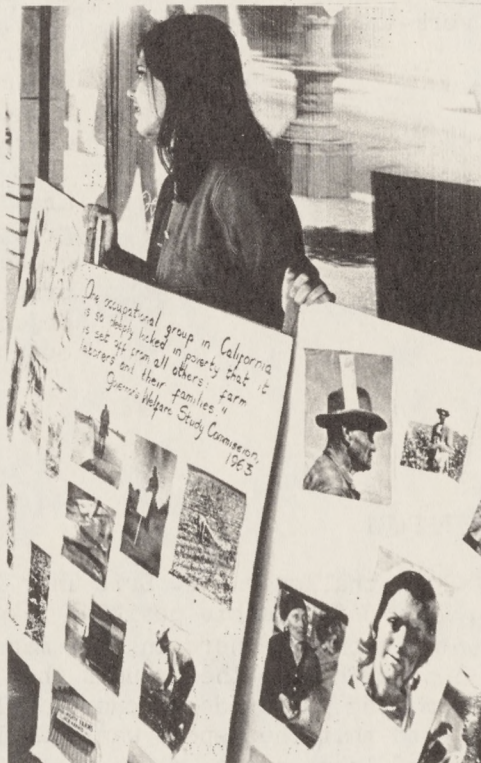
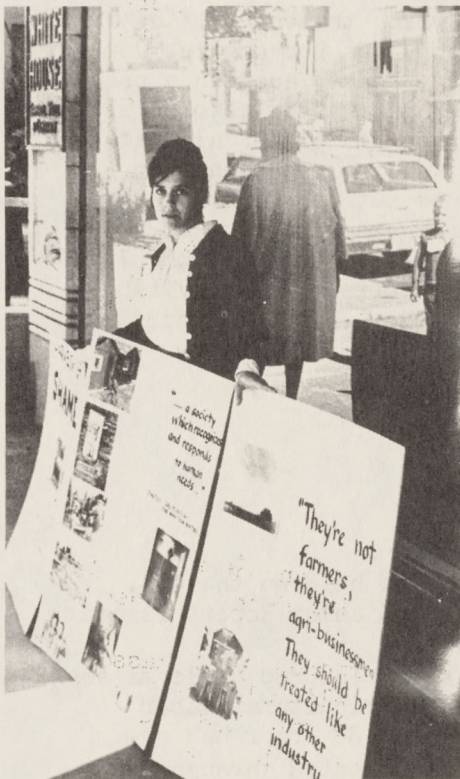
* * *

C.F.L. HARVEST FESTIVAL DEMONSTRATION

The Festival, celebrating "Bountiful California's golden harvest of fruits and vegetables," was centered around a downtown San Francisco department store. The store learned in advance of the Oct. 10 demonstration and pulled in its displays.

The pictures on this page show parts of the photo exhibit. In addition, about a dozen citizens carried picket signs with inscriptions such as "1/3 OF THE NATION'S PRODUCE; 1/3 OF A LIVING WAGE." About 2500 copies of the leaflet reproduced on the opposite page were distributed.

The photo at left shows Irene Bronston talking with the wife of a grower. Below, left, is Rafaella DelBourgo; right is Donna Gemain. Photos are by Henry Anderson.



THE HARVEST FESTIVAL COMMEMORATED IN THESE DISPLAY WINDOWS IS A HARVEST OF SHAME. WE ARE HERE TO SHOW YOU THE HUMAN COST OF CALIFORNIA'S HARVEST AND TO ASK YOU TO JOIN US IN FIGHTING FOR EQUAL RIGHTS FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

did you know that.....

FARM WORKERS RECEIVE NO PROTECTION UNDER THE LAWS
WHICH PROTECT ALL OTHER WORKERS

Taft-Hartley Law (Right to organize; collective bargaining).....	NO PROTECTION
Fair Labor Standards (Minimum wage; maximum hours).....	NO PROTECTION
Fair Employment Practices (Discriminatory hiring).....	NO PROTECTION
Unemployment Compensation.....	NO PROTECTION
Social Security.....	LIMITED PROTECTION
Child Labor Laws.....	INEFFECTIVE PROTECTION

why?.....

BECAUSE THE GIANT CORPORATE FARMS OF CALIFORNIA FEEL THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO CHEAP LABOR. THEY WANT CONTINUED EXCLUSION FOR FARM WORKERS FROM THE PROTECTIONS OF THE LAW. THAT IS WHY THEY IMPORT BRACEROS UNDER FOREIGN CONTRACT LABOR SCHEMES, KEEPING WAGES FOR AMERICAN FARM WORKERS AT 1/3 OF INDUSTRIAL WAGES.

what are the results?....

CALIFORNIA'S SEASONAL FARM WORKERS ARE ILL HOUSED, ILL CLOTHED, ILL FED, UNEMPLOYED, UNDEREMPLOYED, UNDEREDUCATED. THEY WILL REMAIN LOCKED IN POVERTY AS LONG AS THEY ARE SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED FROM LAWS WHICH PROTECT ALL OTHER WORKERS. THEY WILL REMAIN LOCKED IN POVERTY AS LONG AS CHEAP FOREIGN LABOR IS BROUGHT INTO CALIFORNIA.

what can you do?.....

DON'T VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO HAVE FAILED TO SUPPORT CALIFORNIA FARM WORKERS....TELL YOUR FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME.....WRITE THE GOVERNOR AND THE U.S. SECRETARY OF LABOR. DEMAND THE CANCELLATION OF ALL FOREIGN LABOR SCHEMES: ESPECIALLY THE NEW PLAN UNDER "P.L. 414"....KEEP INFORMED....SUPPORT FARM LABOR GROUPS....WRITE YOUR NEWSPAPER....ASK YOUR UNION, YOUR CHURCH GROUP OR YOUR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION TO ADOPT RESOLUTIONS: SEND THEM TO SACRAMENTO AND TO WASHINGTON.

This demonstration is sponsored by Citizens for Farm Labor, a group which opposes all foreign labor schemes because they inevitably depress domestic wages, and which supports protective legislation under the existing labor laws outlined above. We invite your inquiries and requests for more information.

CITIZENS FOR FARM LABOR
Box 1173 Berkeley
California

In 1961, Disability Insurance was extended to farm workers in California. Not only did this provide certain benefits to workers, but it also provided the state with its first reliable set of statistics on the size and composition of the farm labor force in the state. Since each agricultural employer is required, by law, to report the number of workers he has employed each calendar quarter and to report wages earned by the workers, the statistics based on DI reports are fairly complete and accurate if one can assume that all employers do file a report and that this covers all their workers. Last month, the State issued its first comprehensive report. This was based on detailed analysis of a one percent sample of all the farm workers employed during the year 1962. Some of the findings are summarized below. (The complete report is available from the Department of Employment 800 Capitol Ave., Sacramento.)

FACTS ON THE DOMESTIC FARM LABOR FORCE IN CALIFORNIA

Source: California Department of Employment, Research and Statistics
Report #830-1, September 18, 1964

- Q: How many persons in California were employed as farm workers at some time during the year, in 1962?
- A: There were 560,900 persons. 174,800 of these also did non-farm work at some time during that year.
- Q: What was the age and sex distribution of California farm workers?
- A: 406,100 workers were men; 97,600 were female. 67,300 were 19 years of age or younger.
- Q: How much did the farm workers earn?
- A: It depends on which figures you use: the mean or average income adds everyone's wage together and divides by the total number of persons; this figure can be distorted by a few high wages. The Mean income was \$1355. The median income is that income earned by that worker who is exactly in the middle - that is, half the workers are above him, and half are below him. The Median was: \$607. But the figures above include the wages of workers who had farm and also non-farm jobs; since we expect non-farm jobs to pay more, the wages above are probably misleadingly high. The mean income of persons who did only farm work during 1962 was: \$1085. The median income of persons who did only farm work was: \$325.
- Q: How are opportunities for farm work spread out over a whole year?
- A: Very unevenly.
179,700 of the farm workers worked during one calendar quarter only.
102,800 had work during two separate calendar quarters.
103,200 worked during three quarters in the year.
175,200 had work during all four calendar quarters.

NO HELP WANTED

on filling the bracero "gap" in Ventura County
compiled from field reports by Wendy Goepel.

"Citrus growers in the Ventura area refused to consider hiring a guaranteed supply of American labor at \$1.50 an hour, according to the Farm Workers Association." -- Santa Barbara News-Press, September 17.

The Farm Workers Association, headed by Cesar Chavez of Delano, made a bid to provide orange growers with a guaranteed supply of domestic harvest labor, and lost.

Last month, the representative of a small, local packing house in Ojai, Mr. X.X., stated informally that he would have a labor shortage if the bracero program ended; he told Atty. Howard Richards of Santa Barbara that he would be willing to hire 60 domestic workers to fill his labor needs. About the same time, another small citrus grower in the area told Katherine Peake that he would pay \$1.75 an hour if he could get qualified domestics. Scarcely a week later, Y.Y., an official of the Redlands (San Bernardino County) Orange Growers Association, told Atty. Richards that paying \$1.50 an hour to citrus pickers "wouldn't phase us", but added that he was concerned with maintaining a "unified front with the rest of the industry".

Atty. Richards, who acts as legal counsel for the Farm Workers Association of Delano, knew that many California domestic workers are out of work during the Ventura County peak citrus season; he decided to follow through on one of these offers. He informed X.X., who had made the first inquiry about domestics, that qualified domestic citrus workers were available. He said Farm Workers Association domestics would work, under bond, on a contract basis, at \$1.50 an hour, and at \$1.25 an hour during a training period. Before any formal agreement was reached, however, X.X. stated that he had conferred with the Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee and that he was not any longer interested in the domestics. A number of small packing houses and growers in the Ventura County area, including X.X., are bound by marketing agreements with the Ventura Citrus Committee.

Atty. Richards then arranged to meet with William Tolbert, head of the Ventura Citrus Committee, to seek jobs for the domestic workers. He had drawn up a sample contract, which would have been used to supply X.X. with the 60 workers he needed. The contract was now to be used to supply the 3000 workers which Tolbert needed for his 1965 citrus harvest. The contract was one which would have been categorically rejected by a labor union in any other industry as woefully inadequate. The Farm Workers Association was willing to commit itself to the agreement for the entire harvest, providing 3000 workers, under a no-strike, no slowdown term. Specifically the agreement provided that:

- a. all workers be members of the Farm Workers Association.
- b. the grower and the Association together arrive at an estimate of the exact number of workers needed.
- c. the grower guarantee each worker \$6.00 per day minimum in case of bad weather.
- d. work should not be required on Sundays.
- e. the workers would give up the right to strike, or to otherwise interrupt the work; the grower would agree there be no lockout.
- f. all health and sanitation laws would be observed.
- g. workers would be allowed to rest ten minutes after every two hours of work.
- h. wages would be \$1.50 on an hourly basis, or would be piece rates which would yield at least \$1.50 an hour, except during a two-day training period for inexperienced workers. Experienced workers would be provided by the Association for training the new citrus workers.

This was, in essence, the entire contract. Small growers had been willing, informally, to meet the wage demands made in the contract. But Tolbert turned down the contract proposal. He told the Star-Free Press that the Farm Workers Association was "not a recognized organization". Atty. Richards told the paper that the Association would post a performance bond. Local papers reported the incident, headlining:

REFUSAL TO HIKE FARM PAY REPORTED and DOMESTIC FARM WORKERS REJECTED.

Tolbert told the newspapers that "wages and working conditions are as good as can be realistically expected". The Giannini Report just issued shows that the average hourly wage earned by braceros picking oranges in Ventura County in 1963 was \$1.24 an hour.

In recent years, all the citrus harvests in Ventura County have been done by braceros. Citrus is not a stoop labor crop--but there has still be a "labor shortage" and certification of braceros. In the Central Valley, by contrast, all the citrus is harvested by domestic farm workers. Several years ago, some workers from the Central Valley migrated to the Coast to work in the citrus there: two crews from the Tulare-based Sequoia Farm Labor Association worked under a contract which gave them the "prevailing wage". These crews earned an average of \$6.23 a day. They have not returned to the Coast since; their spaces were refilled by braceros.

Association Director Cesar Chavez was quoted in the Santa Barbara News-Press as saying:

"Highly publicized attempts to find workers in distant places is part of this phony plan to mislead the public....Agriculture has no right to run to government for a new supply of cheap foreign labor whenever American employees start to demand the right to live like Americans."

The experience which the Farm Workers Association had with the Ventura County Citrus Growers Committee is possible only because there is a very good possibility that Mexican workers will come in next year under Public Law 414. As long as there is a possibility of recruiting cheap bracero-like labor, no grower association will contract with domestics at higher wages. The ambivalence of public officials on Public Law 414--an ambivalence which will continue until after the elections--is daily undercutting the very limited bargaining power which organized domestic labor has.

The incident reported here was explained in detail to Governor Brown when he met with Citizens for Farm Labor on September 14th. The Governor expressed some surprise over the incident and then asked Mr. Tieburg to investigate the incident and to report on his findings. The results of Tieburg's investigation was summarized in a letter he wrote to the Citizens Committee. While it had been expected that Tieburg's investigation would focus on why standard labor relations procedures were unacceptable to grower management, it instead focused on the enforcement of the letter of the law. Mr. Tieburg stated:

"...I am of the opinion that the major reasons for non-acceptance of the Farm Workers Association's offer by Mr. Tolbert were:

1. The requested minimum wage of \$1.50 per hour guarantee, which is 50% higher than the present \$1.00 per hour guarantee paid by these growers; and
2. the requirement that a closed shop union agreement be signed by the growers.

I can find no violation of any State or Federal laws, regulations or policies involved in this case. As to the allegation that the refusal to accept the workers offer was because of assurances to the growers that foreign workers would be available, I can find no evidence that this was discussed by any of the parties interviewed...." Sincerely, ALBERT B. TIEBURG, DIRECTOR, Department of Employment.

Mrs. Draper first testified before the Industrial Welfare Commission at its Marysville hearing in early 1959, presenting labor's position. She was Research Economist for the California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO at the time. Since then, she has closely followed the development of the agricultural wage order and has participated in most of the IWC hearings on it.

THE FIGHT FOR PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The industrial welfare commission and its agricultural order

by Anne Draper

California's Industrial Welfare Commission was created in 1913 by the State Legislature to protect women and minors against widespread and gross exploitation. Over fifty years have passed, and this goal has yet to be achieved for women and minors in agricultural occupations, who remain second-class citizens with second-class protection in the present IWC order. With the current re-opening of this order, an opportunity exists to correct this shameful disparity.

Moving with leaden feet, the IWC spent five years holding hearings to determine whether wages and working conditions in agriculture justified the issuance of an order. Such orders existed for thirteen other industries and occupations, setting a minimum hourly wage (\$1.30 since August 30, 1964), maximum hours, and other conditions of work.

The agricultural hearings, concluded in 1959, revealed appalling conditions, and the IWC at an historic meeting on October 9, 1959, voted to cover farm women and minors, and proceeded to set up an Agricultural Wage Board to make recommendations to it. The five Commissioners on the IWC are appointed by the Governor for a four-year term, and traditionally two represent labor, two represent the employers, and one represents the public.

The state's Labor Code, Section 1178, requires the Commission to set a "minimum wage adequate to supply the necessary cost of proper living to, and maintain the health and welfare of, women and minors." To guide its decisions, the IWC has developed a budget for a self-supporting working woman, "Minnie's budget," to measure the annual cost of a truly minimum standard of living. In June 1961, it stood at \$2,854.98, in the first updating of the budget since 1950, and was used to re-open all IWC orders - except the agricultural order, No. 14-61.

IWC Order No. 14-61 covering women and minors (defined as 16 & 17 year olds) employed in agricultural occupations, with its inadequate provisions became effective on August 28, 1961, despite bitter grower hostility. Grower representatives on the Wage Board submitted a report that no minimum wage and no limit on hours need be set because more study was required. Employee members on the Wage Board argued for a \$1.25 minimum for all workers, an eight-hour day with overtime and other provisions generally present in the thirteen other wage orders.

With the Wage Board split, the chairman, Dr. Daniel G. Aldrich, U.C.'s Dean of Agriculture, proposed a minimum wage of 80 to 90 cents for both hourly and piece workers and a flat nine hour day maximum. The IWC is not bound by the recommendations of its Wage Boards and may accept, reject, or modify recommendations as it sees fit. It is required to hold public hearings before orders are issued.

The agricultural order finally issued, after some seven years, fell far short of the Commission's responsibility to protect the "comfort, health, safety and general welfare" of women and minors. The Commissioners stated that they had tried to steer a middle course but the order they issued had such glaring omissions that it was sharply criticized by friends of farm labor.

In brief, the order provided for the following:

1. A minimum rate of \$1 an hour for women and minors 16 - 18 years (no provision for youth under 16);
2. A guarantee of two hours reporting pay at the \$1 minimum for hourly workers;
3. For piece workers, no hourly minimum but a "reporting time pay" of \$4 a day "regardless of the length of time such employee is required or permitted to work"
4. Applicable to farm employers hiring ten workers or more;
5. Wage and hour records to be kept for all women and minors employed;
6. Adequate sanitary toilet and washing facilities to be supplied;
7. Weight-lifting by women restricted to 35 pounds;

This order, effective August 28, 1961, was too much for the growers and too little for the friends of farm labor. The latter pointed out that it not only failed to correct the abuses which seven years of study and investigation had spelled out in the greatest detail, but it was discriminatory since it fell far short of the protections contained in other wage orders.

Estimates vary on the number of women and minors employed in farm work but Department of Employment Annual Farm Labor Reports show 38,000 women and 31,150 youth for 1963 - 9.3% and 7.6% of the total number of farm workers. A substantial portion of them (one-third to one-half) are employed on a piece-work basis, working by the bushel, bucket, flat or pound.

Thirteen of the Wage Orders provide the same minimum pay for all workers whether they are employed on an hourly basis or at piece rates. The fourteenth, relating to agricultural workers, has a built-in discrimination against piece workers. A grower could set piece rates yielding an average of 40 cents an hour, work his employees 10 hours a day, pay them \$4 for the day and satisfy this order. Or if the workers worked an eight-hour day, a piece rate averaging 50 cents an hour would satisfy the order.

How can wage rates yielding 40 or 50 cents an hour fulfil the legal responsibility of the IWC to set a minimum wage adequate to supply the working woman with a

minimum standard of living, or maintain her health, welfare, safety and comfort?

The shabby explanation offered by the IWC contradicts its own statements that its duty is to protect women and minor employees. Its glaring failure to protect piece-rate workers is justified by "the difficulty of supervising and keeping accurate records of hours worked by these employees, particularly in the harvest occupations. It was obviously impractical to establish minimum piece rates for all the conditions and products involved in agriculture."

Strange words indeed for a Commission which has set a minimum wage for piece workers in manufacturing, canning, laundry, dry cleaning, and many other industries with hundreds of thousands of piece workers. To cite just one example: a dress shop may have hundreds of new styles each year, each of which has dozens of operations, with innumerable piece rates. Yet the woman worker enjoys the simple guarantee that these rates must yield her the minimum pay, now set at \$1.30 an hour.

For whom is it "obviously impractical to establish minimum piece rates"? The growers have now established piece rates - largely unilaterally, in the absence of unions. By the IWC's own order, they are obliged to keep records of the wages and hours paid to all women and minors. Simple division would reveal what the average hourly rate for piece workers is - as it does in every other industry. Why then the special privilege for agricultural employers?

The failure to protect piece workers is compounded by the order's omission of any provision with respect to maximum hours or overtime pay. It is perfectly legal to work 9, 10, 11, 12 hours daily - and over 48 hours a week - and seven days a week. Again the excuse given: "to provide for rigorous hour limitation would necessarily require extensive record keeping whose value is probably not commensurate with its expense." How thoughtful the Commission was of the growers' expenses and how thoughtless of the human cost.

Other glaring omissions of protective clauses included: no wage and hour protection for minors under 16 years of age; no detailing of sanitary toilet and hand-washing facilities; no rest periods; and a host of other protective clauses found in the other wage orders.

The California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, which has played a major role in demanding adequate and equal protection for agricultural workers from the IWC, criticized the order for its shortcomings. Its 1962 convention passed a resolution calling for the re-opening of this wage order and an end to "the shameful continuation of a dual standard in this state without any semblance of justification in the face of the greater need of farm workers." Other pro-farm labor forces added to the pressure.

In April 1963 the IWC finally voted to re-open the order but it took another year to establish a Wage Board. The first meeting of the Wage Board, composed of 7 employee and 7 employer representatives, plus Dr. Earl Cheit of the University of California as Chairman, took place in September.

The Citizens for Farm Labor presented a statement calling for substantial amendment of the Wage Order to end the second-class status of agricultural workers. They detailed twenty necessary changes to achieve this goal. Pointing out that the average farm worker is employed only 134 days out of the year in California, the committee suggests a minimum wage of \$2 an hour for both time and piece workers.

As of June 1964, Minnie's budget requires an annual income of \$2,929.68. To meet the standards of "comfort, health, safety, and welfare," the Citizens' Committee statement points out that on the basis of an 8-hour day and the sporadic employment available, a woman farm worker would have to earn well over \$2.50 an hour to meet the minimum budget.

The August 1964 convention of the State AFL-CIO passed a resolution stating that the IWC "has pursued a double standard by its failure to accord equality of treatment to women and minors in agricultural occupations despite their greater need." It urged substantial changes in the order, including a minimum wage of \$2 an hour.

The Agricultural Wage Board will be holding meetings to draw up its recommendations to the IWC. The employer representatives can be counted upon to fight any substantial improvement of the order and may even try to roll back the scanty protection now available. Farm workers, who are largely unorganized and lack the enormous public relations and research facilities of the growers, need the support of concerned citizens and organizations. They should let the Industrial Welfare Commission, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, California know that they support the stand taken by Citizens for Farm Labor and the State AFL-CIO.

* * * * *

AFL-CIO RESOLUTION ON AGRICULTURAL LABOR: A Policy Statement for 1964

"Organized labor warns against concerted agribusiness efforts to renew the bracero program on the bogus grounds that Americans find such work too onerous. No one can deny that thousands shy away from this industry today as though it were afflicted by the plague. But the repugnance of farm employment today has nothing whatsoever to do with the work itself. The root cause lies rather in the very elementary fact that California agriculture's wages and fringe benefits, due to its virtually unlimited bracero supply, are only one-third those offered to assembly line workers.

"We contend that for corporate agriculture, as for every other major industry, the primary responsibility to attract an adequate and stable labor supply belongs to the employer. Recognizing that the farm labor fight is California's major battleground in the war on poverty, with profound overtones for the civil right struggle as well, we therefore urge uncompromising resistance to grower overtures for heavily subsidized interstate recruitment programs and other similar subsidies to undermine efforts to place this industry on a self-respecting basis.

"Congress can make a real dent in California's unemployment and poverty problems by honoring its commitment to end Public Law 78 in December. Together with the state, it must follow through with effective measures to provide family housing for farm workers, implement their right to organize, extend minimum wage protection, require field toilet facilities, make unemployment insurance available and maximize year-round job opportunity through diversified skill training programs and full use of union hiring halls in job placement.

* * * * *

In the April issue of FARM LABOR, an article on the Sequoia Farm Labor Association, a farm worker labor co-operative, was printed. Last month's regular report on the co-operative indicated that its director has been re-evaluating the work of this group; the monthly report also included statistical data, based on a three year study of co-op wages and work. Parts of this report, in a slightly revised version, are reprinted below; this material is an excellent companion piece to the first article; it suggests that the co-op plan is no more than a partial solution to farm labor stabilization.

RECONCILIATION: A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH
TO A PROBLEM OF UNEQUAL POWER...
by Kirke Wilson.

The Sequoia Farm Labor Co-op, an incorporated association of 222 farm workers, has functioned since April 1961 as a farm labor contractor. It has acted as employer to nearly 2000 different farm workers who have earned an average of \$1.11 an hour in a variety of crop activities. During the first three years of its existence, the co-op has clearly demonstrated that annual earnings of farm workers can be increased by expanding employment opportunities and through stable crews. At the same time, the co-op has not developed leadership among its members; nor has it successfully educated farm workers to the benefits of the co-op or to the problems which face them. This is partially due to the problems inherent in the subject group: low education, low motivation, cultural diversity, migrancy. It is also due to the self-imposed problems created by placing the co-op between growers and workers as an agency of reconciliation. Too often the agency itself became an institution which perpetuated the existing situation by supplying workers, at their own request, to growers for \$1.11 an hour. The reconciliation tended to reconcile the worker to what he had, rather than to give him an opportunity to improve himself.

Members of the co-op became satisfied with the meager improvement in conditions available through the co-op and hesitant to ask for more. One co-op crew of nine working in Kern County refused to ask for the \$4.00 minimum show-up time pay for women and minors, although the crew had averaged only \$.22 an hour, and the three women and one boy had earned only one dollar apiece. The crew felt that they would get a bad reputation if they complained.

Part of the initial premise for the reconciliation activity was that workers could improve their own condition at no cost to the grower. It has been demonstrated that annual income can be improved; but hourly wages cannot be increased without directly reducing the grower's share. The ambivalence of the co-op, trying to benevolently protect the interests of both the worker and the grower, forced it into many situations where it compromised both grower and worker for the sake of a third force, the co-op itself.

The co-op has never become enough of a force to be able to deal with the existing situation, except as one labor contractor competing with others for jobs. Only on the few occasions when the crew is in the field and the fruit is ripe, has the co-op been able to truly negotiate. Most of the "negotiation" the co-op has engaged in has been accepting or rejecting what the grower offers, or, most often, going to work with the assurance that the

grower will decide on the wage sometime in the future.

On one ranch where the co-op has worked for several years, a five cent hourly pay increase which the co-op received during the plum harvest was voided in the grapes in October. The rancher, as is his custom during the early weeks of the harvest, made himself unavailable either to representatives of his ranch staff or to his picking crews. This prevented any confrontation on wages until the labor force became settled and the harvest became orderly. By this point, those workers who were dissatisfied had either left or resigned themselves to the lower rate. The ranch raised its hourly wage from 70¢ to 90¢ in 1951, and to \$1.10 in 1960. It is a diversified citrus, grape and plum operation which is vertically integrated with its own processing facilities. The ranch employs four seasonal crews for long periods and as many as ten crews for peak harvest situations.

In signing contracts at the prevailing wage, the Sequoia Farm Labor co-op is promising to provide labor under the existing conditions. The mere existence of a contract does not give the worker any security. If the co-op demands improved conditions or wages, it is assuring itself that it will not find employment. The workers who support the co-op know that their problem is to compete for jobs in a situation of constant labor surplus. They want work rather than some remote concept of progress.

Rather than continue bolstering a system which is neglectful of the fundamental dignity of its labor force, it has been proposed that the co-op cease acting to reconcile economic forces of unequal power and begin to develop a countervailing force among farm workers that can act to improve their conditions.

During July, one grower using a co-op crew complained that:

"the crew you sent me was not hungry enough. Farm workers have to be hungry to do a good job."

A farm worker organization would emphasize the elements of the co-op which have been neglected. The organization could put out a newspaper on a regular basis, using it as an instrument of both education and organization. The credit union which the co-op continues to pursue, could be an integral part of the new organization--as an educational and financial service to members. Staff of the organization could continue to provide the interpretive services to members, including liaison with agencies and support for workers on matters of immigration, welfare, social security, insurance, and criminal and civil law.

The organization would be broader than the existing co-op, both in purpose and in its base among farm workers. It could act as an agency of communication for agencies and employers with farm workers. It would also act as an agency of communication among farm workers. It might be that the new organization could develop a hiring hall type procedure for farm workers to create communication. This could be a place where contractors and crew leaders would list their needs so that the type of expanded employment that the co-op did for its own crews could be extended to other crews, through their leaders and contractors.

This new proposal will be discussed and evaluated in the near future.

During the three years that the co-op has existed in its present form, Dr. Franz Dolf, a research assistant from the University of California, has been doing a statistical and organizational analysis of the co-op workers. He has recently completed this report, and his statistics clearly indicate the earning ability of well-organized seasonal farm workers. He shows that workers can get more days of work--and thereby increase their income--but that stable and reliable work crews are not rewarded by being offered higher hourly wages. Our efforts, and their results, are clearly documented in the following tables; some progress of the co-op, over a three year period, is also indicated.

	1961-2	1962-3	1963-4
a. Work Weeks Recorded	42	48	52
b. Average Days of Work per week.	5.0	5.3	5.8
c. Total Number of Working Days.	212	252	299
d. Average Earnings per Day.	\$9.45	\$9.16	\$9.80
e. Potential Annual Earnings of an Individual Who Received Average Earnings Each Day and Who Worked Each Day.	\$2,003	\$2,308	\$2,930
f. Average Hours Worked per Day.	8.45	8.53	8.77
g. Number of Different Co-Op Workers.	280	417	819
h. Workers Working 6 Days or Less, by percent.	51%	62%	69%
i. Percent Working 51 Days or More.	8.5%	4.0%	3.2%
j. Percent Working 101 Days or More.	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%
k. Daily Average Earnings by Crop. (Where Payroll Exceeds \$1,000)			
Crop Activity Basis of Pay			
Grapes picking hourly	\$10.08	\$ 9.67	\$ 9.74
Peaches picking piece		\$13.82	\$12.72
Plums picking hourly	\$ 9.45	\$ 9.67	\$10.37
Plums thinning hourly	\$10.94	\$10.36	
Cotton chopping hourly		\$ 9.66	\$ 8.42
Oranges picking piece	\$ 6.75	\$ 7.35	\$ 9.06
Lemons picking piece	\$ 6.23		
Olives picking piece		\$11.53	

Dr. Dolf concludes that since most of the workers who are employed by the co-op do not work steadily for the co-op, the workers must not "view the total balance of incentives over contributions as particularly favorable for themselves." He points out that every worker makes an individual decision, based on his own experience with the co-op, and that these workers compare co-op work with other opportunities in the labor market. Discussions with workers indicate, concludes Dolf, that they felt they would earn more elsewhere. Staff, Dolf notes, were aware that the co-op would have to secure the best jobs in order to develop stable crews. And finally, growers, in Dolf's opinion, have abundant opportunities to secure workers in a market where a labor surplus exists. The growers do not feel that using co-op crews represent an important advantage for their operations.

In the last issue of FARM LABOR, Bill Esher reported on his experiences in the bracero-dominated canteloupe harvest. Since then, he has joined Ben Mann as assistant director of the West Oakland Farm Workers Association. In the article below, he describes the day-to-day life of an urban, day haul farm worker and discusses some of the problems of building a worker organization in an urban setting.

WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN
by William Esher

"What have we got today?" Charlie's black face shines through the 4 a.m. gloom of Kelly's Texaco, the hiring spot and farm labor "bus terminal" in Oakland.

"We got squash, Charlie. \$1.15 an hour, same as the cucumbers." Charlie and his friends, all high school seniors, have been working the past six weeks in the cucumbers. They are strong and seasoned: it's gruelling work picking cucumbers at an hourly rate with the farmer continually in the field, pushing every minute from 6 a.m. till quitting time, harrassing workers who stand up, who smoke, who speak. This sort of treatment--tough, impersonal, fair--has molded a hardened crew of absolutely competent farm workers out of Charlie and his friends, all teenagers. They've earned the confidence of the grower, something not easy to do. They've even earned a measure of respect from the grower and his family; they have broken a little of the totally false image growers have about workers.

But the last of the cucumbers had been plowed under and the day before, a nearby grower had asked me for a dozen people to work in his squash patch. The grower looked mean and the work looked mean, so I decided to use our tough and proven teenagers on this job. I drove them down from Oakland in a station wagon. The foreman in the squash patch tried to lower the price, but when we stood firm, he confirmed the original agreement made the day before. I left the workers there and went to the pear orchard and the bean field where other crews from the West Oakland Farm Workers Association were working. It was the end of the second day before I saw Charlie again.

Then he told me, kicking at the dirt of the field in a kind of aimless fury, about how they had been given a 15-minute lunch hour and pushed unmercifully in the hottest part of the day. Finally, he said the grower had told them that unless they finished the field by 4:30, they would have to work for nothing until it was finished.

Angry and confused, the teenage crew had decided not to return the next day. I told Charlie we didn't have any other work for them just then. "That doesn't matter, man" he said. "We're not going back there." He didn't understand what had happened, but he knew there was enough hostility to make work impossible. "It's like they don't want us to pick their squash" he said.

I was somewhat confused myself until next day I saw the crew of Mexican Nationals ranging the squash field like a well-oiled machine. They stayed there at least two weeks, until the whole crop was in. Meanwhile the teenagers sat around restlessly in Oakland. Some of them went out with our bus in snap beans, but they weren't geared to this easy-going, low paying work, and as a crew, they disintegrated.

A few of them were in the beans the day the labor cop showed up. He was a compliance officer for the State Labor Board. He was at the beanfield for over an hour, and never got out of his shiny state car or removed his sunglasses. He made no effort to identify himself in any way and when his questions finally became no numerous and specific that I asked who he was, he impatiently flashed a badge in my face.

"You got a lot of teenagers working here, don't you?"

Maybe 10% of them were teenagers, I answered. What was the problem anyway? It wasn't during school hours.

"They better all have work permits" he said threateningly.

I had never heard of a work permit. Hedging, I told the labor officer that all the requirements of the law had been met. He called a few of the teenagers out of the beanfield. They sensed the situation and gave exactly the right response. They had all left their work permits at home. No, they didn't have any identification on them. No, it was all at home. Perhaps the labor officer would like to wait until they were home. I was very happy that these teenagers were more than a match for this representative of state power. The City of Oakland is a pretty realistic training ground for them.

The labor officer then turned to the labor contractor for whom we were working. Then he inspected my driver's license, with which he was unfamiliar, and I had to explain to him the farm labor licensing requirements, to avoid his reporting a nonexistent violation. Finally he drove off. I had learned the hard way to keep our bus discreetly parked behind trees and buildings during the day. You can see a bus a long way off in Santa Clara County.

Harrassment and irresponsibility on the part of growers has proved more difficult to deal with than encounters with government. A few days later I found myself at 8 p.m. in a phone booth in Milpitas, talking to a fruit grower in Saratoga.

"The point is," I was saying, "I've got a busload of people parked outside who have picked prunes in your orchard all day and they've been waiting four hours for their pay. What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm not going to do anything about it," he said.*

I explained to him that the workers for the most part needed the money immediately. The crew was largely a transient group which finds the comparatively easy, low paying work in prune picking not undesirable. I repeated pretty emphatically the need for some immediate action. Four hours is a long time to wait for your pay.

"I'm not going to do anything about it" the grower yelled at me over the phone.

"If you don't pay these men it's going to cost you a lot more in the long run" I threatened.

"You can't talk to me like that" he screamed. "I'm the boss...I'm the boss." He repeated it over and over at full voice. I hung up the phone and went back to

*Since this time, I have come to the conclusion that he was withholding the wages simply because it was a little inconvenient for him to pay and he believed we had no recourse.

the bus and told the men "You're not going to get paid, but as soon as we get back to Oakland, I'll call our lawyer and find out what to do."

We fed and housed 15 of the men, since non-payment of the wages had rendered them destitute. We are very loosely organized and to do this strains the facilities of the Association to the utmost. The next day, one of the workers, acting on his own, went to the grower, who gave him in cash, apparently without question, the wages of the entire crew. The grower got a receipt for it on the back of a paper bag. This worker pocketed the wages, stole our station wagon and left Oakland.

As soon as I was informed, I phoned the grower and asked what had possessed him to entrust the wages of 25 people to a stranger. He again became enraged, and it was not possible to talk. Our lawyer then assisted us in the preparation of a suit.

It is good to know, however, that the forces of disintegration on all sides are balanced somewhat by an almost instinctive desire to act collectively on some meaningful basis. For example:

We worked a few weeks ago topping onions at 8¢ a box. The farmer, a very genial Portugese, came to me in the field in the afternoon to see if we would return the next day. "We can't come back for these wages" I told him. "It would be better for these people to stay at home and be hungry. Most of them haven't made \$4.00 yet." (It was 4 p.m.)

I told him we would return only at 11¢ per box and we weren't able to reach an agreement. Then he went to the workers themselves, who were spread out over the field and knew nothing of these negotiations. He approached several of them individually, asking them to return alone, at an overall rate of 9¢ per box.

"We all work together" he was told (I learned later). "Talk to him over there about the money" and they gestured across the field to me.

When I learned of this uncoached response, I began to feel that not all the cards were against us. Parenthetically, when this grower found that he was not going to get his crop harvested without paying a better wage, he tried to withhold the day's pay in order to force the return of the crew, a fairly common practice. It became impossible to negotiate, and the services of his next-door neighbor, a Union City Farm Placement officer, were required to mediate.

* * *

In a few months' time, the organizers for the West Oakland Farm Workers Association have had too much to learn. We began with the simple idea that providing non-profit transportation to the fields would help Oakland farm workers on a day-to-day basis and a transportation system could serve as the basis for a larger organization. But things have not been that simple. We were entering a system of labor-management relations with a long and cruel history. We entered as a well-meaning intermediary in that system.

In the past, money had been the only connection between the Oakland farm workers and the outside world. The social system of the workers was a closed system wherein oppressed, poorly educated people were continually misinforming and discouraging one another. When we, an intermediary, came in, a channel of communication between the worker and the rest of American life--the outside world--was established. The effect has been very confusing. The workers have, at last, a place where their

grievances can be aired. They have thousands every day to pour out. If we, who claim to represent them, are incapable of resolving their grievances, then their anger sometimes turns on us. For instance, we explain the torturously slow workings of the law as it relates to our wage suit. We say brightly to them: "In six months time, you may have \$100 for that day you worked for nothing." Of course, they laugh at us. They have heard this kind of talk from the outside world for a long time, and it has never made them any better off.

In our attempts to work within the existing system of grower-worker relations, we have also become dupes of the system. When we transport workers to the fields, try to act as their spokesmen, and try to make their round of earning a living at seasonal farm work a little more bearable, we are, in the last analysis, just playing into the hands of the growers. Should we go out on the street corner at 3 a.m. and hustle workers when we know that we must take them to a tomato field where they will be so badly harrassed that they will return to the city at night a little more defeated, smouldering with the impotent anger which finds an outlet only in a bottle of wine or in a senseless attack on some symbol of their personal degradation? Of course not.

Our workers have been pushed continually for years on all sides. For many, this has resulted in an irreparable disintegration of personality. For others, it has resulted in the decision that you must "make it" on your own, in whatever way possible. Our job is to educate the workers in the value of collective action. But we must do this without subsidizing the workers in the process—as we did with the transportation scheme.

At this point, the harvest season is slackening. The winter is about to begin, and a curious thing is happening. Many of the workers are sufficiently demoralized by the countless indignities they have suffered during the spring and summer harvest that they are willing to stay in the city

#1	WANDA BURT			
#2	BILL OLIVE	82	656-650	
	458-64-6051			
#3	ED. SOITO	50	400-396	
	558-12-3884			
#4	WILLIAM KELLERICH	60	480-175	
	550-36-7968			
#5	SHERMAN FORGOTCH	72	576-570	
	127-01-7194			
#6	JOE HILES	64	512-507	
	710-14-5756			
#7	VLASS SHABON	51	408-404	
	574-10-7053			
#8	HARRY WINKLER	67	536-531	
	570-05-0257			
#9	ARTHUR JOHNSTON	38	304-301	
	421-32-7785			
#10	MARTIN RUIZ	66	528-523	
	525-48-3923			
#11	JAMES KELLY	69	552-546	
	554-68-1212			
#12-14	BILL ESHER	93	744-737	
	125-28-9159			

ABOVE: Wage sheet, prepared in the field, by the West Oakland Farm Workers Association early in September. The sheet indicates total wages for ten hours steady work topping onions in Alameda County. The two highest sums indicate the work of two persons on one stub; the highest individual wage was \$5.70. The grower considered the worker group "irresponsible" when they refused as a group to return the following day. This wage sheet was shown to Governor Brown on September 14 to impress upon him the farm workers' desperate need for protections.

and try to "make it"--in one of the hundreds of ways that a person can make it in a big city. They are beginning to do this instead of getting on a farm labor bus. Some of the workers we know go uptown and beg nickels and dimes, and they return to West Oakland at night with more money in their pockets than their friends who have gone out on the busses to earn an "honest day's wage". This shouldn't be possible, but it is. Other workers who rode our busses in the summer and were "vagrants" every night have now been rounded up, arrested and sent to Santa Rita, the county jail-farm. It is harvest season there and the county uses no braceros for its stoop labor harvests.

At this point, we have stopped to do some hard thinking about our Association. But we have no easy answers. The weeks begin to slip by. We have stopped providing the transportation system, and we have begun to lose all contact with the workers. The very idea of our Association has become almost an abstraction. Two of our best people, George and Pearl Jackson, come by one night last week.

"Everybody's out there," they tell us, "waiting for you to come back; waiting for something to happen."

* * * * *

"SITUATION ON FARM LABOR REVIEWED BY LABOR CONTRACTOR"
(from the Hollister Free Lance, October 5)

....I have observed the following locally this summer:

- (1) Crews of local workers being 'pushed' to compete with 'daily amounts of work standards' set according to the accomplishments of Bracero Crews (by pushed I mean that if a worker couldn't keep up with the crew he was 'weeded out' and sent home because he wasn't worth one dollar and five cents an hour).
- (2) Local workers denied ten minute rest periods 'because Braceros don't get it.'
- (3) Braceros picking prunes and getting 30 cents a box while locals working right across the road were getting 25 cents a box.
- (4) Local families picking prunes under phoney bonus arrangements where they average approximately \$1 per hour per worker during the best picking and approximately 50 cents an hour per worker during the first and last pickings.
- (5) Also, I have witnessed Negroes and 'Whites' eliminated from crews automatically because Mexicans are preferred.

I have discussed these practices with many local farmers but I have not registered any formal complaints because I don't believe that, under the present wages offered and methods used, I could manage to attract enough local workers to do all the work that has to be done....and I don't want to see any crops go un-harvested because of a shortage of local labor.

I realize that the average farmer is in a tight 'squeeze' but I think that he is going to have to focus his attention on the fact that he is getting only 37 per cent of what is paid in the stores for the goods that he is working so hard to produce--rather than trying to squeeze any more profit out of labor.

I strongly feel that the solution to this farm labor problem is whether or not we are going to be FAIR TO OUR SECOND CLASS AMERICAN CITIZENS rather than whether or not we need the Braceros.

Sincerely, Frank S. Valenzuela
Farm Labor Contractor
Mayor, City of Hollister

THE CANDIDATES TAKE A STAND ON FARM LABOR ISSUES

With the elections now less than three weeks away, we ask our readers to study the farm labor-related voting records of their representatives in Washington and Sacramento and to take these into account when they vote. The information which follows was prepared by the Friends Committee on Legislation, a non-profit Quaker-led organization which legislates on: disarmament, equal rights, civil liberties, prison reform, Indian affairs and other traditional Quaker concerns. As part of their program the FCL gathers and publishes information on the voting records of lawmakers. Here, from recent FCL publications, is how California congressmen and representatives stand on farm-labor related issues which have been raised in recent years.

I. In Washington:

A. The Senate: Senator Kuchel (R) voted in favor of passage of the Anti-Poverty Bill, and against amendment of the Bracero Bill. The amendment would have required farmers wishing to employ braceros to offer equivalent benefits to American farm laborers first. Salinger (D) had no opportunity to vote on either of these issues.

B. The House of Representatives:

1. The bill extending the Bracero Program through 1964:

For Passage

Representatives Hagen, Hanna, Johnson, Leggett, McFall, Moss, Sheppard, Sisk, VanDeerlin--all Democrats; Clausen, Gubser, Maillaird, Martin, Talcott, Teague, Utt, Wilson, Younger, Bell, Clawson, Hosmer, Lipscomb, Smith--all Republicans.

Against Passage

Representatives Cohelan, Edwards, Brown, Burkhalter, Cameron, Corman, Hawkins, Holifield, King, Roosevelt, Roybal, Wilson--all Democrats; no Republicans.

2. The \$947.5 million dollar Poverty Bill:

For Passage

Representatives Burton, Cohelan, Edwards, Hagen, Hanna, Johnson, Leggett, McFall, Miller, Moss, Sheppard, Sisk, VanDeerlin, Brown, Burkhalter, Cameron, Corman, Hawkins, Holifield, King, Roosevelt, Roybal, Wilson--all Democrats; and Baldwin--Republican.

Against Passage

Representatives Clausen, Gubser, Mailliard, Martin, Talcott, Teague, Utt, Wilson, Younger, Bell, Clawson, Hosmer, Lipscomb, Smith--all Republicans.

II. In Sacramento:

(The table on the following page is a compilation of the voting records of incumbents and a statement of intent from their opponents. It is based on responses to a questionnaire sent to all California candidates; the questionnaire asked how candidates did vote or would have voted on a wide range of issues in which FCL is interested. Here we reprint only votes on farm labor-related issues. The complete report on positions is available from the Friends Committee on Legislation, 2160 Lake Street, San Francisco, for 10¢.

In the state Senate, where there are twenty seats to be filled on November 3rd, the FCL received responses from ten candidates. In the Assembly, where there are 80 seats to be filled, 31 responses were received.)

The first training program for seasonal farm workers under the federal government's Manpower, Development and Training Act was recently completed at Visalia, California under the direction of Peter Lauwreys. An account of the MDTA program and of farm worker-student response to this program is given below by Bill Murdock, counselor on the program. Mr. Murdock has previously worked as a Social Worker in the Sacramento County Welfare Department and on the Peace Staff of the American Friends Service Committee.

SKILL TRAINING AND THE FARM WORKER

by William Murdock.

Monday, July 27, 1964, was the first day of school for 33 seasonal farm workers in the Year-Round Farm Skills project. The purpose of the project was "to demonstrate the feasibility of training unemployed and underemployed farm workers in year-round farm skills". It was jointly sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, the California Department of Employment, and the College of the Sequoias in Visalia. The AFSC provided counseling and supportive services to the student-workers; the Department of Employment's Farm Labor Office screened the trainees; and the College of the Sequoias Farm provided the skill training. The Project was established through a contract between the American Friends Service Committee and the Office of Manpower, Automation and Training of the U.S. Department of Labor under the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962.

California farm workers average 135 days a year employment; on many of those days, the worker may have less than 4 hours' work: this is the labor situation in one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world. It is hoped that farm workers who complete a training program which increases their marketable farm skills will also increase their opportunities for employment. The Visalia workers who studied acetylene welding, electric welding, plumbing and farm electricity during a four week period should be able to find additional jobs, after the harvest and cultural activity periods of employment have ended. Growers have indicated that there is a shortage of workers in these areas.

Workers who attended the Farm Skills school were not guaranteed a new job after training had been completed; yet more workers applied than could be accepted. We were initially very apprehensive about whether there would be enough students to fill the class. Due to a delay in funding the project, actual recruitment of students began only 2½ days before classes were to begin. It was July at the time; this is a harvest period of relatively high total employment in Tulare County. Yet we had recruited a full class, and even turned away workers, by the time school started. To be eligible for M.D.T.A. training, a worker must be unemployed at the time he applies. Our experience here seems to indicate that there is certainly not a domestic labor shortage during harvest season, at least in our area. It also indicates that farm workers do, indeed, want to improve their own lot and believe that formal training programs will help them.

During our recruitment efforts, it became apparent that the traditional approach taken by the public agencies, such as the Department of Employment's Farm Labor Office, of having the worker come to the office--rather than taking the office out to the worker--is ineffective. We began our recruitment program by using all the traditional methods of publicity, including radio, television announcements and interviews, press releases to local newspapers, and so forth. None of these methods were nearly as effective as personal contact with individual

workers in their homes. The value of this counselor-worker relationship is important to both parties; it means something special to the farm workers who are not accustomed to having real personal services performed for them. Whenever we would stop to visit with a worker on an evening or a weekend, he would be initially surprised that anyone would be interested enough in him and his problems to come around on "off hours". In making the home visits, we learned that many of the workers do not have access to a daily newspaper and that they are skeptical of radio and television announcements. They did not really believe that the Farm Labor Office would be providing a service to them. Individual contact proved to be the key to successful recruitment.

Before the actual training got underway, we had given little thought to how farm workers would react to a formal study program. We were also not aware of how many problems would face the worker during a one-month period, while he was in school. By the end of the first day of school, we realized that there would be continual need for close communication between the workers and counselors. Otherwise, we realized, we would lose about half our class. The first day had begun with 33 workers enrolled. They ranged in age from 17 to 62 with the average age about 25 years. Their past educational achievement ranged from third grade through high school graduation.

--After only ten minutes of the introductory remarks of the director of the Agricultural Department of the college, one fifty-five year old worker walked out of the class. I had originally met this worker during a door to door canvas of a small farm labor community, and I had spent several hours with him explaining the program and just talking. He was a sharp fellow, but unfortunately had received only a third grade education. His knowledge of recent social history was very good, and he liked to talk about FED and JFK. (Both presidents' pictures hung on the wall of his small house) He had been doing farm work for about fifteen years and had managed, with the help of his wife, to support the three children on farm labor wages. This worker was concerned, however, that he was being "disemployed" by automation in the fields. He was very interested in the class because he thought it would help him get more employment.

When I learned that he had left the class, I was quite surprised because I had thought he certainly would be one of the ones who would complete the course with a minimum of assistance. That afternoon I went to his home and asked him about the morning's incident. He said that his main consideration in leaving had been the announcement that he could not smoke in the classroom. He had understood that the only time he could smoke would be during lunch hour. I explained that he could leave the class to smoke if he desired and that there would be periods when he would be idle during the day because there was not enough equipment for each student to work on all the time; I told him he could smoke during these idle periods. While I was there, another student who lived next door arrived home from class and verified what I had said. It looked like he might return to class.

He did not come back however, and in later conversations with the neighbor I learned that he had been a little upset with the school regulations but had, in addition, been very embarrassed when the instructor had said that everyone would have to complete a weekly form to receive his training allowance. I had not known, until this point, that he could neither read nor write.

Since that time, I have made other visits to his home. The conversations he has had with his neighbor, who completed the whole course, have caused him to change his thinking and when I last saw him, he asked me to be sure and save a place for him in the next class.

All the other workers were not so easily discouraged. They all had their own way of looking at the training. Most liked the idea of regular, decent hours. They did not have to wake up at four a.m. to catch a ride to the fields but could sleep in until six-thirty or seven. (School began at eight a.m. and ended at three) They enjoyed meeting with other workers and making new contacts for possible future jobs. They also enjoyed the respect they earned in their home communities: they were praised for their attempt to "better their position" and from their families who appreciated the regular income from a training allowance and welcomed the opportunity to show junior how important it is to remain in school.

But the young workers, as a group, needed much help in getting through the four week school. Eleven of the thirty-three students were under twenty-two years of age. This group of students were most concerned with achieving a better life; but at the same time, they expressed the most dismay about their present situation. The young workers really saw little value in training themselves for farm work--hard work that would pay them a maximum of \$1.50 to \$2.00 an hour. They all knew laborers in the cities who made \$3.00 to \$5.00 an hour. Some had already had extensive contact with juvenile authorities and school officials; it was extremely difficult for them to feel like human beings and not like "the system's refuse". They were ambivalent to the "authority figures" at the school, not certain that they would really be given a fair chance. Many of the young people also felt trapped by poor home and family situations.

--One seventeen year old farm worker, already out of school for three years, completed the course despite many obstacles. At his shack home, he had to sleep every night on a couch. On the floor next to him slept two young sisters--on a blanket. The parents, whom I should add were very good people, slept in the bedroom with another child. For this trainee, school was an escape more than a hope; school was an honest income, even though it was a small one. School was an air-conditioned classroom. If the boy should learn something, that was fine, but that was really not the important thing.

The young students contributed most heavily to school dropouts. The group was eventually singled out by the project staff as being very "hard to reach". They were labelled as undesirables, not to be included in future programs if possible.

But the young people did face many problems.

--During the recruitment period, two young brothers, twenty and eighteen, came to the office and applied for training. They were then living with an eighteen year old sister and their grandparents in one of the crowded county labor camps. The two brothers had been raised in Mississippi, Tennessee, and Tulare County. They had moved often and both their education and their work were continually interrupted by moving. Neither had finished high school. After their parents separated, they came to live in the labor camp with their grandparents. They had both been working in farm labor for two years now.

Partly because of the crowded conditions of their apartment, there is animosity between the grandparents and the boys. The boys feel that the grandparents want them to contribute more money to the family than they feel they should. One brother insisted, and I think correctly, that the grandparents discriminated against him in favor of the other brother. The grandparents, for their part, say that the boys don't contribute at all to the household, and that they want them out of the house as soon as possible. The boys would like to leave the house, but they are somewhat ambivalent about this because the home does give them a little bit of stability.

During the first few days of training, both brothers began a pattern of being either tardy or absent. The instructors, who felt that one of the boys was really benefitting from the class work, were concerned about this. I

myself felt that this boy was benefitting from his intimate contact with the older trainees. I went to the boys' home on the days they didn't come to school to see if I could get them back. During each visit, I had to listen to the complaints of the grandparents, some probably legitimate but always bitter; the boys also listened. The grandparents decided that the training allowance the boys were to receive was insufficient and they pressured the boys to drop the class and get work. They had both dropped out of school by the end of the second week. They were able to pick up some farm work, but were unemployed after less than a week. Their family situation remains unchanged.

Some of the adults who are in farm work, and who started out in school, are individuals with a long history of social problems. They wanted the schooling, but there were doubts in their mind--about the school and about themselves. When one worker's check--for his training allowance--failed to arrive with the others, his scepticism about the program suddenly overwhelmed him and he withdrew. A simple bureaucratic error was interpreted in a very personal way:

--P.S. was 33 years old. He attended one semester of high school and then dropped out to look for work in the fields. He fell into difficulties with the law and found himself in Reform School before that first summer out of school has passed. He has been in and out of Reform School, jails, and most recently the State Prison, for almost 10 years. P. says, "It wasn't hard for a Mexican kid to get into trouble, it wasn't easy to stay out of trouble once the police knew you had been in Reform School." P. feels very insecure, refers to his jail record with frequency whenever problems arise. He blames his being unemployed or underemployed on his record. He was married but is now divorced. His ex-wife and his child, which he is not able to support adequately, certainly give him cause for concern. The ex-wife looks for him to ask for money and yells at him, even in the streets. But she does not go to the place where he lives. P. lives, or rather sleeps, at his mother's house with an older brother. According to P., the mother and brother have a fast rule that P. can only sleep there; he is not to be served any meals nor have his clothes washed. He eats at a Mexican Cafe on a cash basis and sometimes goes without eating, for his pride prevents him from asking for credit at the Cafe.

P. dropped out of school during the third week, because he did not receive his training allowance. He was at his wits end and he was hungry too. All encouragement to return to class was to no avail. He referred to "my jail record--they found out about it and that's why I have been dropped". We have been in contact with him daily, furnishing whatever consolation there is --the explanation that government machinery breaks down, a mistake is made. His stock reply is: "I know, but why me, why my check?"....

Despite numerous problems, twenty four of the thirty three students successfully completed the first course. It is difficult now to judge whether the training will have long-range consequences for these workers. Many have indicated that the course was valuable, because of the subject matter and because of many other intangible benefits.

The three-man American Friends Service Committee M.D.T.A. staff received an intensive education during the first phase of the training project. We were concerned that we had not realized how strongly the workers felt about getting training in literacy, civics, and basic math. We are now considering another class in these subjects. The class must be broken up so that the small group of Anglo workers who have literacy needs can be in one group and the non-English speaking Mexican-American workers can be in another. Through experimentation and an honest attempt to clarify and solve some of the school-related problems of farm workers, our M.D.T.A. project may be able to demonstrate that farm workers can be prepared for year-round employment and can adapt themselves more readily to the competitive and harsh "seasonal world of work".

The following resolution was sent to us from the Santa Clara County Council of Churches; it was approved by their Board of Directors on September 18, 1964. It has been condensed slightly to save space.

RESOLUTION CONCERNING FARM LABOR WORKING CONDITIONS

The bracero program under Public Law 78, after more than half-a-dozen extensions will be terminated on December 31, 1964, since it is clear that a sufficient California domestic labor supply is available for the California agricultural industry.

We urge the California state government to actively participate in "phasing out" the bracero program during the remainder of this year. We are concerned that the state government has not made an adequate effort to this end, and that in areas like Sacramento and Stockton, the number of braceros in use this year has increased over 1963 rather than decreased.

We are also concerned about attempts by growers to maintain a ready supply of low-wage farm labor to which they have been accustomed for the last 100 years. These attempts include recent importation of low-wage workers from other parts of the United States as well as efforts to renew the bracero program (Public Law 78) and to find other means of importing foreign labor (such as provision H-2 of Public Law 414). The effect of these efforts, if successful, would be to continue to depress farm labor wages. The use of school aged youth and welfare recipients works the same effect as long as wages and working conditions remain clearly sub-standard. For these reasons, we are opposed to the renewal of Public Law 78 and are also opposed to the continuation of Provision H-2 in Public Law 414.

It is imperative that the state government assist in every way possible to provide conditions allowing the California domestic-laborer to make a living wage in agricultural work, while at the same time it assists those growers unaware of the present supply of California domestic workers in learning of the availability of these domestic workers. We must go beyond the immediate, and somewhat narrow, concern for helping employers find sufficient seasonal workers to replace braceros and focus attention on the major human issue before us as we look at farm labor, namely, the living situation of farm workers and their families.

If in any other industry, wages averaged 86¢ an hour, if there was no overtime, no sick leave, no unemployment insurance, no health or welfare or pension plans, weak child labor laws, no minimum wage, no worker representation, and the average worker was able to find employment only a little over a third of the year, it would not be surprising to find that American citizens would prefer to work in other industries. The labor shortage created would be artificial and could easily be filled by foreign nationals for whom the incentive of 86¢ an hour would be about eight times what they could earn at home in Mexico.

While "phasing out" the bracero program, the state government must also be concerned with phasing our farmworkers into existing protective legislation in the fields of unemployment insurance, child labor, minimum wage, collective bargaining rights and fair employment practices. As consumers we must be ready to pay a few pennies more for the products of the soil, so that the food we eat is not bought at the cost of exploiting farm workers. As Christians we are vitally concerned about the needs of the people who harvest our crops, a people who have been denied those basic protections we concluded long ago were essential to dignified life and work.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS.

While in Guadalajara this summer, I noticed a billboard announcing a film. On the billboard was a picture of a man dangling on the landing gear of a helicopter, hovering over the Manhattan skyline. The man had a big grin on his face and the title of the film printed underneath was El Bracero del Ano. I had seen, only the day before at Empalme, a huge concentration camp of prospective braceros who were squatting among rows of filthy refreshment stands and I was morbidly curious about what on earth a bracero would be doing dangling from a helicopter.

I missed the beginning of the film, but it was quite obvious that the hero had left his sweetheart to try his luck in America. He finds himself in New York and after a series of confusing events (such as dangling from the helicopter's dukes), someone gives him a lift in a car and five dollars telling him the equivalent of "Go West, Young Man". With the advice warm in his heart, our hero stows away on a moving van and ends up in California--as a bracero of all things.

In California, he immediately manages to get a job in the tomato fields and by some fluke he is quickly selected as "Bracero of the Year". A rancher with a thick Western tie, stetson hat, and a crisp gringo accent, announces at a very fancy banquet that our hero picked more tomatoes than any other bracero in America. For a prize, he is taken on a cook's tour of Olvera Street in Los Angeles and out to Hollywood; he appears on TV, and is then taken to observe the shooting of a love scene which is not as passionate as the director would like it to be.

The director asks our hero to replace the gringo male lead in the belief that the bracero is a sure lower-type. Sure enough, one kiss causes the American actress to fall in instant love with him and in the next few scenes, the actress is taking the bracero for rides in her Chevy II and is urging him to --let's go. But soon, the hero decides that he wants to go home to his senorita. Just as he embarks for home, a rich man, he loses all his prize money; he finally gets home to marry his senorita with no runs and three men left on base.

A friend who studies at the University of Guadalajara told me that the film producer had a lot of American money and influence behind him. I am getting a new education on the bracero system; your magazine needs some humor....

Peter Weisner,
Berkeley.

We in Sonoma County are very much interested in the farm labor problem, and many of us are also interested in raising the farm workers' standard of living. Unfortunately, the farm worker has no one to represent him in this predominately agricultural area, and I thought possibly your organization could correspond with us....

Mike Wheeler
Santa Rosa

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

The November issue of FARM LABOR will be devoted to a presentation, and explanation, of a legislative package which would equalize the rights of California's agricultural workers.

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